

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 04490 271243Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7282

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

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AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4490

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, TS

SUBJ: BEN SALAHIST TRIAL

REF: TUNIS 4326

1. STATE SECURITY COURT TRIAL OF BEN SALAHISTS CONTINUED
UNTIL JUNE 22 WHEN PROCEEDINGS WERE ADJOURNED BECAUSE OF
ILLNESS OF PRESIDING JUDGE. COURT OFFICIALS TOLD DEFENSE LAW-
YERS THAT TRIAL MAY BE RESUMED JUNE 28.

2. IN SESSIONS HELD LAST WEEK, INTERROGATION OF DEFENDENTS
FOLLOWED LINES ESTABLISHED IN FIRST WEEK OF TRIAL. PROCEED-
INGS REPORTEDLY BEING CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH TUNISIAN
JUDICIAL PRACTICE AND ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. PRESIDING JUDGE
HAS POSED QUESTIONS ABOUT BEN SALAHIST GROUP'S ACTIVITIES
CENTERING ON THE PREPARATION OF TRACTS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO
SIGNIFICANT NEW DISCLOSURES AND NO EXAMINATION SO FAR OF EVIDENCE
OF SERIOUS ANTI-REGIME SUBVERSION. DEFENSE LAWYERS TOLD US THAT ONE
DEFENDANT (A FORMER INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICIAL) TOLD COURT
THAT HE WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN DURING HIS INTERROGATION BY
POLICE THAT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAD "VERITABLE TORTURE

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LABORATORIES." ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, THE PRESIDING JUDGE
REFUSED TO HEAR THESE CHARGES.

3. PRESS TREATMENT OF THE TRIAL CAN BE DIVIDED INTO TWO CATEFORIES.
GOVERNMENT AND PARTY CONTROLLED PAPERS (L'ACTION, AL-AMAL AND
LA PRESSE) ARE PUBLISHING SELECTIVE STATEMENTS OF THE DEFENDENTS
ACCOMPANIED BY HEADLINES THAT EXTRACT DECLARATIONS THAT TEND TO

SUBSTANTIATE THE GOVERNMENT'S INDICTMENT. PSD WEEKLY DIALOGUE
PUBLISHED A CONDEMNATORY ARTICLE ON JUNE 20 ATTACKING THE BEN
SALAHISTS. DIALOGUE DREW HEAVILY ON CHARGES IN THE OFFICIAL IN-
DIQTMEN AS IF THEY WERE PROVEN FACTS. SEMI-INDEPENDENT DAILIES
LE TEMPS AND AS-SABAH ARE PUBLISHING FULLER ACCOUNTS OF TRIAL
(DESCRIBED TO US BY DEFENSE LAWYERS AS ACCURATE AND REASON-
ABLY COMPLETE) WITHOUT ATTEMPTS TO PREJUDGE THE ACCUSED. THESE
PAPERS ARE ALSO PUBLISHING INDIRECT REMARKS OF DEFENDEPTS PURPORT-
ING THAT THEY WERE MISTREATED DURING POLICE INTERROGATION.

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Message Attributes

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